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Amana Corporation

Eleventh Edition (1430 AH/2009 AC)

## Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

'Ali, 'Abdullah Yusuf, 1872-1952.

The meaning of the Holy Qur'an / 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali.- 11th ed.

p. cm.

"Qur'anic Text (Arabic), with Revised English translation, commentary and index".

Includes index.

ISBN 1-59008-025-4 (hard cover) - ISBN 1-59008-026-2 (soft cover)

I. Title: Holy Qur'an. II. Koran. English &amp; Arabic. 2004. III. Title.

BP109 2004

297.1'227-dc22

2004046368

ISBN 1-59008-025-4 Hardcover (6x9) [Replacing ISBN 0-915957-76-0]

ISBN 1-59008-026-2 Soft Cover (6x9) [Replacing ISBN 0-915957-32-9]

ISBN 1-59008-016-5 Pocket Size (4x6) [Replacing ISBN 0-915957-77-9]

Published by Amana Publications

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This Revised Eleventh Edition is the product of cumulative experiences gained over the past three decades in publishing translations of the meaning of the Qur'ān in several languages. Amana Publications has been blessed in publishing this great work of the late 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī, revised in 1989 for the first time after his death, with the highest standard of scholarship and authenticity that it deserves.

The work on the first revised edition started in the eighties as a joint collaborative project with The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in the United States of America. A committee of highly reputable Islamic scholars was tasked to select the available English translations of the meaning of the Qur'ān, the most authentic and recognizable one. The selection committee settled on the work of 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī and solicited opinions and criticisms from Islamic institutions and scholars worldwide. Several committees reviewed all the responses carefully, examined the text meticulously, updated the material and refined the commentaries. The final complete review was undertaken by the late Ismā'īl Rājī al Fārūqī, then President of The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

Guided by its commitment to serve the Qur'ān, Amana Publications and The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) set up an Editorial Board to carry out the recommendations of the committees, the preparation of the manuscript and finalization of the editorial changes and revisions of style and format. The first revised casebound edition was printed in 1409 AH/1989 AC and was followed up with paperback and pocketsize editions in the nineties. A comprehensive index was added to the edition of 1996 AC.

This new Eleventh Edition is the product of a prolonged process that Amana Publications undertook in digitizing the English text of the Book while keeping the Arabic Qur'ānic text intact in the Madina script. The entire English text of the translation and the Commentary has been revised. For ease of reference, the lists of Sūrahs have been moved to the front (pgs. vii and viii) and the eleven appendices have been listed at the end of the Table of Contents.

A special word of gratitude goes to our readers of all faiths and shades of life who have generously contributed to the improvement of every edition we publish by sending in their comments and corrections that escaped our proof-readers and editors of the translation and the commentary.

We acknowledge with deep appreciation the efforts of IIIT and all those who helped produce this monumental work of 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī. May Allah bless his soul and reward him generously.

Wa al Hamdu li Allah Rabb al 'Ālamīn (All Praise and Gratitude is due to Allah, the Lord and Sustainer of the Worlds).

Muharram, 1425 AH

Fakhri al Barzinji, President

March, 2004 AC

Amana Publications

Beltsville, Maryland

U.S.A.



## PUNCTUATION MARKS IN THE ARABIC TEXT

The system of Qur'anic punctuations used in the Arabic script selected for this new revised edition in accordance to *riwāyat* Ḥafs 'an Nāfi' (the narration of Ḥafs on the authority of Nāfi'), incorporates several kinds of signs or symbols indicating variations in methods of *Qirā'ah* (or recitation of the Qur'ān). The following table of symbols, known as the '*Alāmāt al Waqf*' (or Signs for Stops), gives a brief description of their meaning and a reference giving an example of their use:

- ◌ Waqf Lāzim—must stop at place indicated; for example, see 6:36;
- ◌ Waqf Mamnū'—must not stop at place indicated; for example, see 16:32;
- ◌ Waqf Jā'iz—may or may not stop at place indicated (there is no preference); for example, see 18:31;
- ◌ Waqf Jā'iz, al Waṣl Awlā—may or may not stop at place indicated, but first preference is not to stop; for example, see 6:17;
- ◌ Waqf Jā'iz, al Waqf Awlā—may or may not stop at place indicated, but first preference is to stop; for example, see 18:22;
- ◌◌ Ta'anūq al Waqf—may stop at either place indicated, but not both places; for example, see 2:2. (R).

## DIVISIONS OF THE QUR'ĀN

THE reading of the Qur'ān is considered a pious duty by every Muslim and is actually performed in practice by every literate person—man, woman, and child. For the convenience of those who wish to complete the whole reading in a given time, the whole Text is divided into thirty equal parts. The thirtieth Part is called *Juz'* in Arabic, and *Sipārah* or simply *Pārah* in Persian and Urdu. If you read a *Juz'* every day, you complete the whole reading in a month of thirty days. Usually the arithmetical quarters of a *Juz'* (one-fourth, one-half, three-quarters) are also marked in the Arabic copies as *al rub'*, *al nisf*, and *al thalāthat arbā'*.

According to subject matter, the division is different. The whole of the Qur'ān is arranged in 114 Sūrahs of very unequal size. The Sūrahs are numbered and the consecutive number is shown just before the title of the Sūrah in English. In Arabic, the number of the *Juz'* and the title of the Sūrah are given at the head of every page in the Sūrah. Each Sūrah consists of a number of *Āyāt*. Sūrah 1 contains 7 *Āyāt* and Sūrah 2 contains 286. For the meaning of Sūrah and *Āyah* see C. 42 and nn. 15-17. The most convenient form of quotation is to name the Sūrah and the *Āyāt*: thus 2:120 means the 120th *Āyah* of the second Sūrah. A Sūrah is usually spoken of as a Chapter in English, but that translation is hardly satisfactory. If you examine the order you will find that Sūrah is a step in a gradation. I have left the word untranslated, as a technical term in our religious literature. The *Āyah* or verse division is usually determined by the rhythm and cadence in the Arabic Text. Sometimes an *Āyah* contains many sentences. Sometimes a sentence is divided by a break in an *Āyah*. But usually there is a pause in meaning at the end of an *Āyah*. (R).

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1. In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.<sup>19</sup>

2. Praise be to Allah,

The Cherisher and Sustainer<sup>20</sup> of the Worlds;

3. Most Gracious, Most Merciful;

4. Master of the Day of Judgement.

5. Thee do we worship,<sup>21</sup> and Thine aid we seek.

6. Show<sup>22</sup> us the straight way,

7. The way of those on whom

Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,

Those whose (portion) is not wrath,<sup>23</sup>

And who go not astray.<sup>24</sup>

18. By universal consent it is rightly placed at the beginning of the Qur'ān, as summing up, in marvellously terse and comprehensive words, man's relation to Allah in contemplation and prayer. In our spiritual contemplation the first words should be those of praise. If the praise is from our inmost being, it brings us into union with Allah's Will. Then our eyes see all good, peace, and harmony. Evil, rebellion, and conflict are purged out. They do not exist for us, for our eyes are lifted up above them in praise. Then we see Allah's attributes better (verses 2-4). This leads us to the attitude of worship and acknowledgment (verse 5). And finally comes prayer for guidance, and a contemplation of what guidance means (verses 6-7).

Allah needs no praise, for He is above all praise; He needs no petition, for He knows our needs better than we do ourselves; and His bounties are open without asking, to the righteous and the sinner alike. The prayer is for our own spiritual education, consolation, and confirmation.

That is why the words in this Sūrah are given to us in the form in which we should utter them. When we reach enlightenment, they flow spontaneously from us.

19. The Arabic words "*Rahmān and Rahīm*," translated "Most Gracious" and "Most Merciful" are both intensive forms referring to different aspects of Allah's attribute of Mercy. The Arabic intensive is more suited to express Allah's attributes than the superlative degree in English. The latter implies a comparison with other beings, or with other times or places, while there is no being like unto Allah, and He is independent of Time and Place. Mercy may imply pity, long-suffering, patience, and forgiveness, all of which the sinner needs and Allah Most Merciful bestows in abundant measure. But there is a Mercy that goes before even the need arises, the Grace which is ever watchful, and flows from Allah Most Gracious to all His creatures, protecting them, preserving them, guiding them, and leading them to clearer light and higher life. For this reason the attribute *Rahmān* (Most Gracious) is not applied to any but Allah, but the attribute *Rahīm* (Merciful), is a general term, and may also be applied to Men. To make us contemplate these boundless gifts of Allah, the formula: "In the name of Allah Most Gracious, Most Merciful": is placed before every Sūrah of the Qur'ān (except the ninth), and repeated at the beginning of every act by the Muslim who dedicates his life to Allah, and whose hope is in His Mercy.

Opinion is divided whether the *Bismillāh* should be numbered as a separate verse or not. It is unanimously agreed that it is a part of the Qur'ān. Therefore it is better to give it an independent number in the first Sūrah. For subsequent Sūrahs it is treated as an introduction or headline, and therefore not numbered.

20. The Arabic word *Rabb*, usually translated Lord, has also the meaning of cherishing, sustaining, bringing to maturity. Allah cares for all the worlds He has created (see n. 1787 and n. 4355).

There are many worlds – astronomical and physical worlds, worlds of thought, spiritual world, and so on. In every one of them, Allah is all-in-all. We express only one aspect of it when we say: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." The mystical division between (1) *Nāsūt*, the human-world knowable by the senses, (2) *Malakūt*, the invisible world of angels, and (3) *Lāhūt*, the divine world of Reality, requires a whole volume to explain it.

21. On realizing in our souls Allah's love and care, His grace and mercy, and His power and justice (as Ruler of the Day of Judgement), the immediate result is that we bend in the act of worship, and see both our shortcomings and His all-sufficient power. The emphatic form means that not only do we reach the position of worshipping Allah and asking for His help, but we worship Him alone and ask for His aid only. For there is none other than He worthy of our devotion and able to help us. Then plural "we" indicates that we associate ourselves with all who seek Allah, thus strengthening ourselves and strengthening them in a fellowship of faith (see n. 586).

22. If we translate by the English word "guide," we shall have to say: "Guide us to and in the straight Way." For we may be wandering aimlessly, and the first step is to find the Way; and the second need is to keep in the Way. Our own wisdom may fail in either case. The straight Way is often the narrow Way, or the steep Way, which many people shun (90:11). By the world's perversity the straight Way is sometimes stigmatized and the crooked Way praised. How are we to judge? We must ask for Allah's guidance. With a little spiritual insight we shall see which are the people who walk in the light of Allah's grace, and which are those that walk in the darkness of Wrath. This also would help our judgement.

23. Note that the words relating to Grace are connected actively with Allah; those relating to Wrath are impersonal. In the one case Allah's Mercy encompasses us beyond our deserts. In the other case our own actions are responsible for the Wrath – the negative of Grace, Peace, or Harmony.

24. Are there two categories? – those who are in the darkness of Wrath and those who stray? The first are those who deliberately break Allah's law; the second those who stray out of carelessness or negligence. Both are responsible for their own acts or omissions. In opposition to both are the people who are in the light of Allah's Grace; for His Grace not only protects them from active wrong (if they will only submit their will to Him) but also from straying into paths of temptation or carelessness. The negative *ghayr* should be construed as applying not to the way, but as describing men protected from two dangers by Allah's Grace.



## INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAH 2 – AL BAQARAH

As the Opening Sūrah sums up in seven beautiful verses the essence of the Qur'ān, so this Sūrah sums up in 286 verses the whole teaching of the Qur'ān. It is a closely reasoned argument.

**Summary** – It begins (verses 1-29) by classifying men into three broad categories, depending on how they receive Allah's message.

This leads to the story of the creation of man, the high destiny intended for him, his fall, and the hope held out to him (2:30-39).

Israel's story is then told according to their own records and traditions – what privileges they received and how they abused them (2:40-86), thus illustrating again as by a parable the general story of man.

In particular, reference is made to Moses and Jesus and their struggles with an unruly people: how people of the Book played false their own lights and in their pride rejected Muḥammad, who came in the true line of Prophets (2:87-121). (R).

They falsely laid claim to the virtues of Father Abraham: he was indeed a righteous Imām, but he was the progenitor of Ismā'īl's line (Arabs) as well as of Israel's line, and he with Ismā'īl built the Ka'bah (the House of Allah in Makkah) and purified it, thus establishing a common religion, of which Islam is the universal exponent (2:122-141). (R).

The Ka'bah was now to be the center of universal worship and the symbol of Islamic unity (2:142-167).

The Islamic *Ummah* (brotherhood) having thus been established with its definite centre and symbol, ordinances are laid down for the social life of the community, with the proviso (2:177) that righteousness does not consist in formalities, but in faith, kindness, prayer, charity, probity, and patience under suffering. The ordinances relate to food and drink, bequests, fasts, jihād, wine and gambling, treatment of orphans and women, etc. (2:168-242).

Lest the subject of jihād should be misunderstood, it is taken up again in the story of Saul, Goliath and David, in contrast to the story of Jesus (2:243-253).

And so the lesson is enforced that true virtue lies in practical deeds of manliness, kindness, and good faith (2:254-283), and Allah's nature<sup>24-A</sup> is called to mind in the sublime *Āyat al Kursī*, the Verse of the Throne (2:255).

The Sūrah ends with an exhortation to Faith, Obedience, a sense of Personal Responsibility, and Prayer (2:284-286).

This is the longest Sūrah of the Qur'ān, and in it occurs the longest verse (2:282). The name of the Sūrah is from the Parable of the Heifer in 2:67-71, which illustrates the insufficiency of carping obedience. When faith is lost, people put off obedience with various excuses: even when at last they obey in the letter, they fail in the spirit, which means that they get fossilised, and their self-sufficiency prevents them from seeing that spiritually they are not alive but dead. For life is movement, activity, striving, fighting against baser things. And this is the burden of the Sūrah.

This is in the main an early Madīnah.

C. 44. – The Message of Allah, is a guide that is sure  
(2:1-29.) To those who seek His light. But those  
Who reject faith are blind: their hearts  
Are sealed. Woe to the hypocrites,  
Self-deceived and deceiving others,  
With mockery on their lips, and mischief  
In their hearts, and fear; the clouds  
That bring fertilizing rain to others,  
To them bring but deafening thunder-peals  
And lightning flashes blinding to their eyes.

24-A. By the expression "Allah's nature" the author means Allah's attributes. [Eds.].

## Sūrah 2.

## Al Baqarah (The Heifer)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,  
Most Merciful.



1. Alif Lām Mīm.<sup>25</sup>
2. This is the Book;  
In it is guidance sure, without  
doubt,  
To those who fear<sup>26</sup> Allah;
3. Who believe in the Unseen,  
Are steadfast in prayer,  
And spend out of what We  
Have provided for them;<sup>27</sup>
4. And who believe in the  
Revelation  
Sent to thee,  
And sent before thy time,  
And (in their hearts)  
Have the assurance of the  
Hereafter.<sup>28</sup>

25. These are abbreviated letters, the *Muqatta'at*, on which a general discussion will be found in Appendix I (at the end of this Sūrah).

The particular letters, *Alif, Lām, Mīm*, are found prefixed to this Sūrah, and Sūrahs 3, 29, 30, 31 and 32 (six in all). In 2 and 3 the argument is about the rise and fall of nations; their past, and their future in history, with ordinances for the new universal people of Islam. In 29 a similar argument about nations leads off to the mystery of Life and Death, Failure and Triumph, Past and Future, in the history of individual souls. The burden of 30 is that Allah is the source of all things and all things return to Him. In 31 and 32 the same lesson is enforced: Allah is the Creator and He will be the Judge on the Last Day. There is therefore a common thread, the mystery of Life and Death, Beginning and End.

Much has been written about the meaning of these letters, but most of it is pure conjecture. Some commentators are content to recognize them as some mystic symbols of which it is unprofitable to discuss the meaning by more verbal logic. (R).

26. *Taqwā*, and the verbs and nouns connected with the root, signify: (1) the fear of Allah, which, according to the writer of Proverbs 1:7 in the Old Testament, is the beginning of Wisdom; (2) restraint, or guarding one's tongue, hand, and heart from evil; (3) hence righteousness, piety, good conduct. All these ideas are implied: in the translation, only one or other of these ideas can be indicated, according to the context. See also 47:17; and 74:56, n. 5808.

27. All bounties proceed from Allah. They may be physical gifts, e.g. food, clothing, houses, gardens, wealth, etc. or intangible gifts, e.g., influence, power, birth and the opportunities flowing from it, health, talents, etc. or spiritual gifts, e.g., insight into good and evil, understanding of men, the capacity for love, etc. We are to use all in humility and moderation. But we are also to give out of every one of them something that contributes to the well-being of others. We are to be neither ascetics nor luxurious sybarites, neither selfish misers nor thoughtless prodigals.

28. Righteousness comes from a secure faith, from sincere devotion to Allah, and from unselfish service to humankind.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَلِف لَام مِيم

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ

هُدًى لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ

وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ

وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ



5. They are on (true guidance),  
From their Lord, and it is  
These who will prosper.<sup>29</sup>

6. As to those who reject Faith,<sup>30</sup>  
It is the same to them  
Whether thou warn them  
Or do not warn them;  
They will not believe.

7. Allah hath set a seal<sup>31</sup>  
On their hearts and on their  
hearing,  
And on their eyes is a veil;  
Great is the penalty they  
(incur).<sup>32</sup>

## SECTION 2.

8. Of the people there are some  
who say:<sup>33</sup>  
"We believe in Allah and the Last  
day;"  
But they do not (really) believe.

9. Fain would they deceive  
Allah and those who believe,  
But they only deceive themselves,  
And realize (it) not!

10. In their hearts is a disease;

٥ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ  
وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

٦ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ  
أَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

٧ خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ  
وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ  
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

٨ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ  
وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

٩ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا  
وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

١٠ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ

29. Prosperity must be taken as referring to all the kinds of bounty which we discussed in the note to 2:3 above. The right use of one kind leads to an increase in that and other kinds, and that is prosperity.

30. *Kafara, kufr, kāfir*, and derivative forms of the word, imply a deliberate rejection of Faith as opposed to a mistaken idea of Allah or faith, which is not inconsistent with an earnest desire to see the truth. Where there is such desire, the Grace and Mercy of Allah gives guidance. But that guidance is not efficacious when it is deliberately rejected, and the possibility of rejection follows from the grant of free will. The consequence of the rejection is that the spiritual faculties become dead or impervious to better influences. See also n. 93, n. 3557, and n. 3644.

31. All actions are referred to Allah. Therefore when we get the penalty of our deliberate sin, and our senses become impervious to good, the penalty is referred to the justice of Allah (Cf. n. 1460, n. 2146, and n. 3577).

32. The penalty here is the opposite of the prosperity referred to in 2:5. As we go down the path of sin, our penalty gathers momentum, just as goodness brings its own capacity for greater goodness.

33. We now come to a third class of people, the hypocrites. They are untrue to themselves, and therefore their hearts are diseased (2:10). The disease tends to spread, like all evil. They are curable but if they harden their hearts, they soon pass into the category of those who deliberately reject light.

- And Allah has increased their  
disease:<sup>34</sup>  
And grievous is the penalty they  
(incur),  
Because they are false  
(to themselves).

11. When it is said to them:  
"Make not mischief on the earth,"  
They say: "Why, we only  
Want to make peace!"

12. Of a surety, they are the ones  
Who make mischief,  
But they realize (it) not.<sup>35</sup>

13. When it is said to them:  
"Believe as the others believe:"  
They say: "Shall we believe  
As the fools believe?"—  
Nay, of a surety they are the  
fools,  
But they do not know.<sup>36</sup>

14. When they meet those who  
believe,<sup>37</sup>  
They say: "We believe;"  
But when they are alone  
With their evil ones,  
They say: "We are really with you  
We (were) only jesting."

15. Allah will throw back  
Their mockery on them,  
And give them rope in  
their trespasses;  
So they will wander like blind  
ones (to and fro).

16. These are they who have  
bartered  
Guidance for error:

34. The insincere man who thinks he can get the best of both worlds by compromising with good and evil only increases the disease of his heart, because he is not true to himself. Even the good which comes to him he can pervert to evil. So the rain which fills out the ear of corn or lends fragrance to the rose also lends strength to the thorn or adds strength to the poison of the deadly nightshade. (Cf. 9:125 and n. 1376).

35. Much mischief is caused (sometimes unwittingly) by people who think that they have a mission of peace, when they have not even a true perception of right and wrong. By their blind arrogance they depress the good and encourage the evil.

36. This is another phase of the hypocrite and the cynic. "Faith," he says, "is good enough to fools." But his cynicism may be the greatest folly in the eyes of Allah.

37. A deeper phase of insincerity is actual duplicity. But it never pays in the end. If we compare such a man to a trader, he loses in the bargain.

فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا  
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ

١١ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ

١٢ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ  
وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ

١٣ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ  
قَالُوا أَتُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ  
أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ

١٤ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا  
وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شُيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ  
إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ

١٥ اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ  
وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ

١٦ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا  
الْضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ